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C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 000435

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STATE FOR NEA/MAG - LAWRENCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/26/2016  
TAGS: [ENRG](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TS](#)  
SUBJECT: TUNISIA CONSIDERS NUCLEAR POWER

REF: A. TUNIS 81  
[1](#)B. 05 TUNIS 2433

Classified By: AMBASSADOR WILLIAM HUDSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In light of Tunisia's ongoing energy challenges, the Tunisian press reported in mid-February that the GOT is studying the possible development of nuclear, and other alternative, power to meet its domestic energy needs to combat the challenge of rising oil prices. MFA contacts stress these are initial studies only, and there is no reason to suspect Tunisia has any military intentions in mind. Given historical ties to other nuclear energy producers such as France, it is not surprising that Tunisia would consider nuclear power. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On February 23, the local French-language newspaper Le Temps reported that the national electricity company (STEG) recently sponsored a seminar on national energy options. The article claimed that several members of the Chamber of Deputies believe that GOT energy saving measures, which have been widely publicized, are not effective. Seminar attendees concluded that nuclear power is the best long-term alternative for Tunisia's energy needs.

[1](#)3. (C) During a February 23 meeting with MFA Director General for the Americas and Asia Ghazi Jomaa, Ambassador asked about Tunisia's interest in nuclear power. Jomaa said the GOT was interested in the possibilities of new renewable energy sources, including solar and nuclear power generation. However, Jomaa stressed that this was still being studied and that the GOT was not focusing on nuclear, as much as it was studying all alternative energy options.

[1](#)4. (C) COMMENT: Given the challenge Tunisia faces to provide fuel and electricity to the local market because of high international oil prices, it is no surprise that the nuclear power option is being discussed. Tunisia's strong political and economic ties to France - itself a major nuclear energy consumer - further reinforce this strategy. If a decision is made to develop a domestic nuclear power industry, it is likely Tunisia will seek international investment to finance any project. Given Tunisia's official position on the peaceful use of nuclear power (Ref A and previous), post expects the goals of these studies are purely economic. END COMMENT.  
HUDSON